

1. Law to stop adults sexting children not in force

March 2017

Government dragging its feet on making it illegal for an adult to send a sexual message to a child in England and Wales.

More than 50,000 people joined our Flaw in the Law campaign calling on the Government to make it illegal for an adult to send a sexual message to a child.

Last year Parliament introduced the new offence in England and Wales which meant an adult would be breaking the law if they sent a sexual communication to an under 16-year-old.

But now - nearly 2 years later - the Government has yet to trigger the law already successfully used to catch abusers in Scotland.

Link: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/fighting-for-childhood/news-opinion/anti-grooming-law-delay-unacceptable/>

2. Children of alcoholics manifesto launch

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Children of Alcoholics has published a manifesto setting out 10 points the government needs to address to support children. The manifesto calls for: a national strategy for children of alcoholics; boosting education and awareness for professionals with a responsibility for children; an increase in availability of support for families battling alcohol problems. The manifesto was launched as part of Children of Alcoholics (COA) Week, 12-18 February 2017.

Link: <http://www.coaweek.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Children-of-Alcoholics-A-Manifesto-for-Change-pages.pdf>

3. Tackling child sexual exploitation: update

The Home Office has published a policy paper giving an update on action the government is taking to deal with child sexual exploitation since the publication of 'Tackling child sexual exploitation' in 2015. The paper looks at progress for the three strategic aims of tackling offending, reducing vulnerability and supporting victims and survivors. Findings include: 24% increase in recording of contact child sexual abuse offences by the police; 14% increase in volume of defendants prosecuted and a 19% increase in volume of offenders convicted for child sexual abuse-related offences in the year to December 2015, compared with the previous year.

Link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/592589/Tackling_Child_Sexual_Exploitation_-_Progress_Report__print_.pdf

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4. Child sexual exploitation: definition and guidance

The Department for Education (DfE) has published a definition of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and a guide for practitioners and managers. Advice for practitioners working with children includes: a definition of CSE; potential indicators of CSE; how children are sexually exploited; and how sexual exploitation affects children. Guidance for managers and leaders includes: prevention, educating practitioners, educating children and young people, and educating parents and carers.

The DfE has published annexes to the guidance. Annex A covers adolescent development and includes: transitions; relationships; key risks and responses. Annex B is a guide to disruption orders and legislation setting out examples of disruption measures, civil powers and criminal offences which may be used by practitioners.

The government response to a consultation on revising the definition of child sexual exploitation has also been published.

Link: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/591903/CSE_Guidance_Core_Document_13.02.2017.pdf

5. Mental health support for pupils in schools

Place2Be and the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) have published the results of a survey of 1,115 school leaders looking at the challenges faced by schools when supporting pupils' mental health in England and Wales. Findings from responses include: 56% of school leaders said it is difficult to find mental health services for pupils; 39% said they were not very confident or not at all confident that their staff would know how to respond if a pupil had a mental health crisis; 93% of head teachers said pupils bring more worries into school than they did 5 years ago; 97% of primary school leaders said people underestimate the level of mental health problems among school children.

Link: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582380/mappa-guidance-2016.pdf

6. Rise in drug and alcohol related reports

The NSPCC highlights statistics which show that the number of contacts to the NSPCC helpline that raised concerns of substance abuse near children has increased by 16% since 2013/14 with 8,500 people from across the UK contacting the charity last year. The figures mark the start of Children of Alcoholics Week (12-18 February), which aims to raise awareness of the problems and suffering associated with parental alcohol problems.

Link: <http://www.coaweek.org/>